

Tu BiSh'vat 5779, Jan 20, 2019

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*"Lift on high your eyes and see: Who created these?"*

שָׂאוּ מְרוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם וּרְאוּ מִי בָרָא אֱלֹהִים

(Isaiah 40:26)

Our ancestors often thought of an eclipse as a bad omen, so they did not prescribe a blessing for it. But we understand an eclipse to be a natural marvel that reminds us of the grandeur of Creation, so many now believe that we should say a blessing. Here is one blessing to say for a lunar eclipse — if possible, wait til totality (when the moon turns red) to say it. Otherwise, say it anytime you can see part of the moon already in shadow.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם עוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרָאשִׁית

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh Ha'olam  
`oseh ma'aseh v'reishit*

Blessed be You YHVH/Adonai our God, Ruler of all space and time,  
the One who makes the masterpiece of Creation!



### **A prayer for the total lunar eclipse on Tu BiShvat:**

*As we receive the light of the sun  
reflected in the face of the moon, may we  
receive wisdom to guide our future. May  
we reflect hope, so that we give strength  
to each other. We are a part of the Earth's*

*shadow, and a part of the Earth's atmosphere, which bends the red light of the  
sun to illuminate the moon. When we cast our own shadow, may we still shine  
a gentle light to illuminate the world around us. May we be awakened by the  
grandeur and awe of Your works, so that may we may be filled with courage to  
heal the Earth from human destruction. May salvation arise for the heavens,  
and may this full moon of Shevat bring blessing to the fruit trees and to all  
Life. May we strengthen the Tree of Life with all our actions, so that the sun  
may shine for blessing, for us and for all life.*

**A Tu BiShvat seder under the full moon eclipse.** Reflections on the eclipse and the moon in Jewish tradition, organized according to the cups of the seder. Some verses related to each cup and its fruit follow each reflection.

BLESSINGS: wine: **borei peri hagafen** fruit: **borei peri ha-eits**

I. As a lunar eclipse progresses, the Earth's shadow takes a bigger and bigger bite out of the moon. But when the eclipse reaches totality, something new happens: all the direct light from the sun is blocked, and the only light reaching the moon passes through Earth's atmosphere. That light — like the light reaching our eyes at sunset after passing the long way through our atmosphere — is red. In that moment, the color of the moon's light changes, from the pure white of night, to the red of the setting sun.

*Song of Songs* 6:10-11: Who is this radiating like dawn, beautiful like the moon, clear like the sun, awe-inspiring like the arrayed banners of *all the stars*? I went down to the nut garden, to see the verdure of the riverbed, to see, is the vine flowering? Are the pomegranate blossoms bursting?

מִי זֹאת הַנִּשְׁקָפָה כְּמוֹ-שֶׁחַר יָפָה כְּלִבְנָה בָּרָה כַּחֲמָה אֵימָה כְּנִדְגָלוֹת:  
אֶל גֶּזַת אֶגְזוֹ יִרְדְּתִי לִרְאוֹת בְּאֵפִי הַנֶּחֱל לִרְאוֹת הַפְּרֻחָה הַגֶּפֶן הַנִּצְוֵי הָרִמּוֹנִים:

II. Our ancestors told a story to explain the difference between the light of the sun and the light of moon. The sun and the moon, they said, were equal sources of light at the beginning of Creation, for it's written, "God made two *great* lights". (*Gen.* 1:16) But then God told the moon to make herself small, as it says, "...the great one to rule the day, and the small one to rule the night." (*Talmud Chulin* 60b)

Why? According to the story, the newly created moon saw the sun and said to the Holy One, "Can two rulers share one crown?" God rebuked the moon for this question, and its light became dim compared to the sun. But the moon protested. At the end of the story, God admits that it was God who sinned against the moon, for it was God who created a world in which two rulers can't share one crown.

*Psalms* 92:12: A righteous person will flourish like a date palm, like a Lebanon cedar will they thrive. צְדִיק כַּתְמָר יִפְרַח כְּאֶרֶז בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגֶּה:

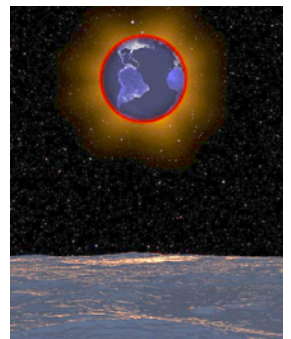
"And the dove came in to the ark at evening, and here, an olive leaf was torn off in her mouth." (*Gen.* 8:9) From where did she bring the leaf? The gates of *Gan Eden* were opened for her... If she came from Eden, wouldn't she bring something special like cinnamon or balsam? But she hinted to Noah: Better is bitterness from here rather than sweetness from under your hand. (*Genesis Rabbah* 33:6)

### Mini-Tubi seder

I. wine/juice:

**WHITE**

fruits  
with shells:  
pomegranate  
almond  
walnut



lunar eclipse  
fr. the moon's  
perspective,  
NASA

II. wine/juice:

**WHITE +  
drop of red**

fruit  
with pits:  
olives  
dates  
plums  
peaches

***A Tu BiShvat seder under the full moon eclipse, 2.***

III. The mystics said, this story teaches that it is up to *us* to create a new world, where many people can share the crown and rule together, where masculine and feminine, like sun and moon, become equal, where all creatures stand in unique relation to the Holy One. And then the answer to the moon's question will be "Yes!", and the moon will be made whole.

In memory of this story, the liturgy for blessing the waxing moon includes this plea: "May it be Your will *YHVH/Adonai*, my God and my ancestors' God, to fill the blemish of the **white one** *levanah* (the moon), and may the light of the white one be like the light of the **hot one** *chamah* (the sun), and like the light of the seven days of beginning creation, like it was before she was made small.

*Prov. 27:18*: Whoever protects a fig tree gets to eat her fruit...

נֶצֶר תִּאֲנֶה יֹאכֵל פְּרִיָּהּ...

*Psalms 80:15*: God of heavenly hosts, turn, please, look out from the heavens, see and remember to steward this vine.

אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת שׁוּב נָא הִבֵּט מִשְׁמַיִם וּרְאֵה וּפְקֹד גִּפְנֵי זֹאת:

IV. During the hour of total eclipse, the moon reflects the color of the sunset, a color of ripeness, and so becomes like the sun, a hint of redemption. Another light is also revealed in a lunar eclipse. Normally, only the brightest stars are visible in a full moon. But as the moon enters our shadow, all the stars blaze alongside her. As we witness this great equalization in the heavens, may we witness a great liberation on the Earth and in the human heart, the dawn of a world where all creatures stand in beauty and grandeur, reflecting the holiness of their Creator.

*Prov. 27:19*: Like the water surface showing a face to one's face, so is the human heart for a human.

כַּמִּים הַפָּנִים לַפָּנִים כֵּן לִב־הָאָדָם לָאָדָם:

R' Yochanan said: The world was not worthy to make use of the cedars; they were created only for the Temple that makes all holy. (*Genesis Rabbah* 15:1)

*Psalms 104:19-24*: Who made the moon for seasons; the sun knew its setting... How diverse are Your works *YHVH*!... When You send Your Spirit, Your breath, they are created, and You renew the face of the Earth.

עָשָׂה יָרֵחַ לְמוֹעֲדִים שָׁמַשׁ יָדַע מְבוֹאוֹ: תִּשְׁתַּחֲשֹׁף וִיהִי לַיְלָה... מֶה רַבּוֹ מַעֲשֵׂיֶיךָ יְהוָה כָּלֵם בְּחִכְמָה עָשִׂיתָ מְלֶאכֶה הָאָרֶץ קִנְיָנָה... תִּשְׁלַח רוּחְךָ יִבְרָאוּן וּתַחֲדֹשׁ פְּנֵי אֲדָמָה.

***May it be the Holy One's will that our blessings and pleasure in tasting and witnessing bring blessing to the cosmos and to the fruits, to help restore to its original strength the Tree of Life that sustains all Life.***

III. wine/  
juice:

**WHITE +  
RED**

wholly  
edible fruits:

apples  
grapes,  
figs,  
berries



IV. wine/juice:

**RED +  
drop of  
white**

tree smells/  
tastes:

cedar  
cinnamon  
maple syrup

## Blessings to accompany any Tu BiShevat Seder

1) Blessing for wine: ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן

*Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu, melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-gafen.*

Blessed be You, who creates the fruit of the vine.

2) Blessing for tree fruit: ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי העץ

*Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu, melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-eits.*

3) Blessing for experiencing something new (Shehechyanu):

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם שהחינו וקימנו והגענו לזמן הזה

*Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha-olam, she-hechyanu v'kiy'manu v'higi'anu la-z'man ha-zeh.*

Blessed be You, who has kept us alive and sustained us so that we could reach this moment.

4) Blessing for smelling ripe fruit: ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם הנותן ריח טוב פירות

*Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha-olam, hanotein rei'ach tov bapeirot*

Blessed be You, who puts good scent in fruit.

5) Blessing for other sweet smells:

Sweet-smelling trees like cinnamon, tree flowers:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם בורא עצי בשמים

*Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha-olam, borei atzei b'samim*

Blessed be You, who creates sweet-smelling trees.

Sweet grasses/plants: *Barukh... borei isvei b'samim* ברוך אתה... בורא עשבי בשמים

Blessed be You, who creates sweet-smelling plants.

Other sweet smells: *Barukh... borei minei b'samim* ברוך אתה... בורא מיני בשמים

Blessed be You, who creates all kinds of sweet-smells.

6) Blessing after eating various fruit and other foods:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם בורא נפשות רבות וחסרונן  
על כל מה שבראת להחיות בהם נפש כל חי. ברוך חי העולמים

*Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha-olam, borei n'fashot rabot v'chesronan,  
al kol ma she-barata, l'hachayot bahem nefesh kol chai, barukh chei ha-olamim.*

Blessed be You, who creates so many different living things, all needing each other, for all You created, to give life through them to the Soul of all Life. Blessed be the Life of all worlds.